



# Chapter 4

# CORRECTION

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Expand the scope of the department’s mission to include supervision of all adult felony offenders while in the community or in a Department of Correction facility. Having all aspects of an offender’s contact with the state correctional system consolidated under one state agency ensures continuity, consistency, and compliance.
- Establish a unified prison system by improving institutional operations for consistency, ensuring security equipment is standardized, and evaluating processes related to offender management.
- Review processes to ensure the maximum utilization of resources. Already areas have been organized and new areas have been created to improve the department’s overall effectiveness.

## INTRODUCTION

As Tennessee’s largest law enforcement agency, the Department of Correction employs approximately 5,400 people and provides supervision of convicted felons during their period of confinement in the department’s institutions. The department fulfills its obligations to the courts through the incarceration of inmates in a variety of secured institutions. Fourteen prisons comprise the state’s correctional system, three of which are managed privately by Corrections Corporation of America. The Tennessee Department of Correction (TDOC) continues to be one of a few state prison systems in the country to have all facilities maintain their national accredited status by the American Correctional Association. As of December 31, 2011, 19,734 inmates were housed in state prisons, and 9,708 inmates were in a county facility. The department consists of its headquarters in Nashville, the Tennessee Correction Academy in Tullahoma, and its fourteen prisons.

The department's official mission is to enhance public safety in Tennessee through the incarceration and rehabilitation of felony offenders. To ensure that everyone understands the "bottom line" priority of the department, the motto of "safe and secure prisons" was added as a way to ensure that safety remains the primary focus. This message has been shared throughout the state at leadership meetings and visits across the state. Furthermore, the message remains consistent among senior staff as changes are introduced to the organization and then implemented. Regardless of the changes and innovations that occur throughout the department, public safety will not be compromised.

The department's vision focuses upon three areas: professional development of its employees; operations enhanced by technology and best practices; and opportunities for offenders' rehabilitation to reduce recidivism. The changes implemented since January consistently demonstrate this vision.

The values of the department include commitment to fair and ethical treatment of convicted felons; respect for fellow employees; responsibility and accountability to citizens of Tennessee; and integrity in both external and internal relationships.

## APPROACH/METHODOLOGY

The Top to Bottom Review examined Correction's current mission and entire operations as related to three core focus areas: people, processes, and infrastructure.

**People:** Do we have the people with the appropriate skill levels to provide the services required?

**Processes:** Are the current processes addressing the needs to ensure we are doing the job as efficiently as possible? Are current processes consistent with best practices? Are these processes part of our core mission? Can someone else do it better?

**Infrastructure:** Is our current facility plan sustainable for the future?

The process of reviewing the people, processes, and infrastructure of the department began early in 2011. The review helped focus leadership and required them to review their areas with a fresh perspective. Through the introduction of reengineering theory and principles, assistant commissioners, wardens, and directors were given a tool to use while examining people, processes, and infrastructure. In the summer, the department conducted a series of field summits to elicit the staff's perspective of the department's strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for improvement.

Process action teams, consisting of all levels of staff, were established to review ways to improve efficiency and enhance operations without compromising quality and safety.

Through the Top to Bottom Review process, which included facility site visits, senior leadership meetings, and a series of field summits, a list of recommendations was developed that will enhance the agency's ability to perform its core mission of "operating safe and secure prisons."

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**Recommendation 1:** Expand the scope of the department's mission to include supervision of all adult felony offenders while in the community or in a TDOC facility.

**Discussion:** The Tennessee Department of Correction and the Tennessee Board of Probation and Parole are committed to enhancing public safety through the incarceration and rehabilitation of felony offenders, the operation of safe and secure prisons, and the supervision of offenders on release.

While both agencies have been operating as separate entities since 1999, TDOC and BOPP share overlapping responsibilities in the supervision of adult felony offenders. The process of streamlining services began in 2009 when the General Assembly approved legislation requiring TDOC and BOPP to develop an individual treatment and supervision

plan for each offender. The Joint Offender Management Plan embarked upon in 2009 was a springboard for aligning the agencies' responsibilities in order to achieve greater successful offender reentry into the community.

Designating one state agency to oversee all aspects of a person's contact with the state correctional system further enhances continuity, consistency, and compliance. The recommendation is to realign the supervision of adult felony offenders (probation, parole, community corrections, and prisons) under the authority of the Tennessee Department of Correction. Correctional professionals nationally have concluded that the public and the offenders are best served with a unified system that allows consistent supervision, program delivery, and a philosophy of enforcement. Nationwide, forty states operate under a consolidated system. In fact, consolidation is widely recognized as a criminal justice best practice.

The transfer of adult felony supervision would realize an estimated \$714,801 in decreased expenditures as a result of streamlining processes and realigning duplicative services. Specifically, the \$714,801 savings would be from below the line expenditures in the following areas: building rents and leases, data processing services, supplies, training, sensitive minor computers, travel, telecommunications, professional services, records management, and printing and duplication.

TDOC assumes that the growth to the department will result in an increased volume of purchases and the ability to leverage lower costs. Designating one state agency to oversee an adult felony offender's supervision will require a change in legislation.

**Recommendation 2:** Improve customer service throughout the department, with both internal and external customers.

**Discussion:** Recognition of good customer service improves staff morale and helps other staff understand what is expected. Effective customer service ensures that problems are handled quickly

and effectively. Improving customer services includes training in verbal and written communication, organization, and teamwork. Some progress has begun in this area, including the establishment of a Customer Service Award to be given quarterly to an employee who exemplifies model service.

**Recommendation 3:** Develop staff training that is based upon core competencies.

**Discussion:** Through the new Division of Organizational Development, the department is engaged in the identification and analysis of employee core competencies required to perform the critical tasks desired. Core competencies refer to the key skills that are put into practice to deliver value to the customer. The goal is to develop training and staff development programs designed to address not only the specific skills, but also the conceptual knowledge and understanding necessary to employ those skills effectively. Because the Department of Correction is a diverse, complex organization, developing training based upon core competencies is a multi-year effort.

**Recommendation 4:** Establish a unified prison system by ensuring consistent standards.

**Discussion:** While the department's institutions have different types of offenders which may in turn affect a facility's mission, several areas have been identified that can be improved upon to ensure consistency in operations. Just as consistency is essential in the operation of a successful business, consistency improves the efficiency of prison operations and creates a standard of professionalism for the staff within the prisons. Further, these practices move beyond a single work area, thereby reducing silos and encouraging communication across the different areas of work. In 2011, the Operations Division worked with the prisons to ensure consistency in areas such as inmate property, controlled movement, and cell inspections.



Further, developing a unified prison system required a review of the mission of each facility, while keeping the department's mission of maintaining safe and secure prisons in the forefront. The Charles Bass Correctional Complex in Nashville was an area that was impacted by the assessment. While the facility's Annex was classified as a minimum-security, work release facility, it could not operate under the current design and maintain the integrity of being called a secure facility. The facility was closed in November. The facility will be evaluated for upgrades or possible permanent closure. The facility will remain vacant until a determination is made about the future.

**Recommendation 5:** Reengineer/evaluate the bed management process from arrival through placement.

**Discussion:** A critical component of ensuring safe and secure prisons in a difficult economic climate requires utilizing our prison beds effectively without compromising safety. This requires reengineering to evaluate the bed management process from the offender's arrival through classification to the offender's placement into an appropriate custody-level bed.

**Recommendation 6:** Review the recruiting and hiring process for correctional officers.

**Discussion:** Currently, hiring at the four Nashville prisons occurs independently of each other. By streamlining the hiring process in Davidson County, the department can reduce duplicating efforts in interviewing, increase consistency in regards to the skills and abilities of the applicants who are hired, and have a pool of applicants whenever a vacancy occurs.

**Recommendation 7:** Review ways to reduce overtime.

**Discussion:** Overtime is a significant expense within the Department of Correction. Hiring freezes, employee attendance, inmate transportation, and inmate medical issues all contribute to the use of overtime. Currently, the department is not taking advantage of appropriate FLSA scheduling for law

enforcement agencies. By implementing a new twenty-eight day schedule, the department can reduce overtime costs and reduce the number of officers needed for each shift without compromising safety.

**Recommendation 8:** Determine whether physicals and psychological exams can be conducted prior to a new officer hire attending the Tennessee Correction Academy for Basic Correctional Officer Training.

**Discussion:** All correctional officers must pass a physical examination administered by a licensed physician and be certified as free from all apparent mental disorders by a qualified professional in the psychiatric or psychological fields. Currently, medical and psychological testing is accomplished at the Academy during the first week of training; those who are dismissed will have worked for two or more weeks prior to being dismissed. Consequently, moving the medical and psychological testing earlier in the hiring process will save time and money.

**Recommendation 9:** Maintain an ongoing review of facility engineering projects.

**Discussion:** The most significant engineering project at hand is the construction of the Bledsoe County Correctional Complex (BCCX) in Pikeville, TN. The new BCCX project also includes a new waste water treatment plant; a new sewer line between the Taft Youth Center, Southeastern State Regional Correctional Facility, and BCCX; a new 15-mile, 1 million gallon per day water line from the City of Pikeville to the plateau serving the local community as well; and a new 161 KV electrical sub-station. The total new prison construction square footage is approximately 430,000 square feet. 1,444 new TDOC beds will be added as a result of this project. Other ongoing projects include fire alarm system updates, upgrades to sallyports and pedestrian gates, and upgrades to security electronics. All of these improvements enhance security and create a safer prison environment for both offenders and staff. Further, the department looks to develop a system to track and review the

status of all projects. In some instances, some processes may be accelerated by utilizing skilled inmate labor.

**Recommendation 10:** Review by the department's Local Jail Resources Office of what different jails are offering by way of programming to identify best practices.

**Discussion:** Many jails across the state house TDOC offenders. While some areas are able to provide a variety of programming opportunities for offenders, other areas are more limited in their resources. By reviewing program and treatment offerings at different facilities, the department's Local Jail Resource Office can identify best practices as well as help local areas successfully utilize limited resources. Through examining and implementing best practices, offenders will be better prepared when they are released and recidivism will be reduced.

**Recommendation 11:** Complete the implementation of CompStat and Monthly Roll-Up reports.

**Discussion:** The department has started work to develop performance objectives to monitor effectiveness in key areas. Two elements have been introduced: CompStat and the Monthly Roll-Up. Each element is designed to provide snapshots of information deemed to be relevant to the decision-making process. The CompStat report focuses upon individual facility effectiveness, whereas the Monthly Roll-Up allows executive staff to review areas system-wide. Successful implementation of these tools requires the completion of five phases: selection of relevant data, collection of selected data, formatting of data, training for data driven decision making, and quality control. In addition to increasing accountability, leaders at all levels will have an opportunity to be involved in the decision-making process.

**Recommendation 12:** Continue identifying areas to examine for improvement within prison operations, e.g., allowed items, visitations, max-custody beds, duty

officers, and a phase-down program for higher custody level inmates.

**Discussion:** The nature of corrections requires that the review of security operations and procedure be ongoing. Work groups have been established to examine visitation procedures, checkpoint procedures, items allowed within the facilities, and max/close custody processes. Reviewing processes ensures that the department is operating efficiently and working in alignment with the agency's objectives. For example, reviewing visitation and checkpoint procedures helps reduce contraband entering a facility. Developing a phase-down program for higher custody inmates is a way to encourage positive changes in offender behavior. Having standard processes makes it easier to train staff and it ensures that the customer has the same experience.

**Recommendation 13:** Identify opportunities for further improvements to rehabilitative programs, to include expanding Pro-Social Life Skills, exploring programming options for maximum custody offenders, strengthening vocational programming, and expanding correctional release centers.

**Discussion:** Ninety-seven percent of all TDOC offenders will be released back into the community. The safety of every Tennessean depends on the successful reentry of these offenders into society upon release. The department can reduce victimization and improve public safety through using rehabilitative programming and effective reentry preparation that have been proven to produce positive offender outcomes.

**Recommendation 14:** Release Request for Proposals for the increased provision of mental health services.

**Discussion:** The department released a Request for Proposal (RFP) to secure a contract for mental health services at eleven (11) state-managed facilities. Services to be provided include, but are not limited to, psychiatric, psychological, substance abuse, case management, and pharmaceutical services. The implementation of a best practice

model represents an important step in enhancing diagnostic and treatment options, as well as efficiency and cost effectiveness in the delivery of correctional mental health care.

**This recommendation has been completed.**

**Recommendation 15:** Implement quarterly reporting of performance by the medical contractor to the commissioner.

**Discussion:** In Fall 2011, Correction staff met with the department's medical contractor to review the contractor's performance during the past year and to establish performance expectations and standards for the coming year. All outcome measures were designed specifically to produce operational efficiencies, maintain quality of care, improve public safety, and reduce costs to the department.

**Recommendation 16:** Create leadership development training for directors and senior management.

**Discussion:** Correction must be a learning organization. This requires the department to engage in systems thinking, build a shared vision, and encourage team learning. Correction shall start with its leaders since they communicate the vision, build consensus among their colleagues, and model the actions that should be developed in others. Moving forward, the department must also identify future leaders and integrate them into appropriate leadership training with the current leadership.

**Recommendation 17:** Build in-house training capacity for LEAN.

**Discussion:** The steps necessary to successfully improve Correction will require ongoing planning and evaluation, as well as efficient resource allocation and utilization. Utilizing LEAN concepts will aid the department in moving forward. LEAN management focuses on what are the key processes in all departments/agencies, what services are they delivering, and how much of what is being done is

value-added (what the taxpayer truly needs and is willing to pay for) versus non-value added.

Senior management was introduced to business process reengineering in June 2011 and to LEAN in September 2011. By educating people about LEAN management concepts, they understand the benefits to themselves and their organization. This understanding helps them take ownership of the transformation. When there is ownership of the LEAN management transformation, the entire organization can improve by driving performance towards an ideal state and increase employee acceptance of change. Correction staff members have participated in the Department of Finance and Administration's LEAN training. Three staff were trained as facilitators in fall 2011, and three more were trained in January 2012.

**Recommendation 18:** Fully examine the accounting process of local jails to improve the flow of new arrivals into the state system.

**Discussion:** Several counties in Tennessee house locally-sentenced offenders as well as offenders sentenced to TDOC custody who are awaiting transfer into a TDOC institution. As of December 31, 2011, 4,422 offenders were locally sentenced, 4,621 offenders were housed in a local jail while waiting for a space in a TDOC facility, and 665 other convicted felons were also in a county jail. Consequently, such a large population necessitates a review of current processes. This project is very broad in scope and will require process reengineering.

**Recommendation 19:** Research energy alternatives that may be incorporated into the department.

**Discussion:** A geothermal system has been installed at the new Bledsoe County Correctional Complex. The department is in the final design phase for a geothermal system at NWCX for HVAC and hot water generation.

**Recommendation 20:** Implement electronic fund transfers for offender families to deposit funds.

**Discussion:** Currently, families of offenders who want to deposit money into the offender's account go through a mail-in process that is received and processed manually in the prison. Due to the segregation of duties, multiple employees are involved in receiving, depositing, and accounting for the funds. By automating the process, funds will be received faster and processed more efficiently.

**Recommendation 21:** Increase the use of TDOC farm-grown products.

**Discussion:** Several prisons operate vegetable gardens to supplement the food that is provided to offenders. Not only is this a healthier alternative than canned and processed food, but it also is cost effective as well. The prison farm in Davidson County also includes a compost recycling program, which diverts waste from landfills, prevents pollution, and produces compost that eliminates the use of fertilizer on the farm and provides an excellent balance of nutrients in the soil for optimum crop production. This initiative maximizes resources for the department as a whole, while benefitting inmate workers, giving them an opportunity to engage in meaningful work that allows them to develop a work ethic and learn more about the role they play in helping the environment. Moving forward, the department can look to replicate this model throughout the state. By coordinating efforts, the department anticipates substantially reducing its food cost.

**Recommendation 22:** Expand video conferencing with courts.

**Discussion:** TDOC is responsible for transporting inmates across the state, from facility to court. In 2011, all Davidson County Criminal Court Judges adopted video conferencing, so a total of six Nashville judges now use electronic equipment to arraign offenders rather than transport the individuals directly into the courtroom. In calendar year 2011, 212 inmates were arraigned by video conference. This means there were 212 fewer

opportunities to risk public safety because the offender, though present in court, was still confined in a secure facility. TDOC is looking to expand this offering to other counties.

**Recommendation 23:** Amend TCA 40-3-609, regarding exercising law enforcement authority.

**Discussion:** The proposed legislation would amend the current law to expand the circumstances under which the Commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Correction may designate employees who have been trained in the use of firearms as vested with the powers and authority of law enforcement officers, including the authority to carry weapons, while performing special details or assignments in the course of their duties as authorized by the commissioner.